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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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A new release of the C++ atari emulator is available for download at its usual location:

www.math.tu-berlin.de/~thor/atari++

This release fixes the ADC and SBC implementation in BCD mode if supplied with non-BCD input. Furthermore, support for network mounted data is better now, and I also addressed a keyboard issue that made some keys effectively unreachable. As always, you find sources and binaries on the page.

Have fun,

Thomas

Updated SCSI/Link Drivers Available

I've uploaded new versions of the SCSI/Link drivers for STiNG and MintNet to the Anodyne Software web site; you can download them from this URL:

<http://www.anodynesoftware.com/ethernet/main.htm>

The previous versions are still there, just in case ...

The fixes are as follows:

STiNG: Fixed bug that caused problems when the MAC address of the SCSI/LINK changed, either due to replacing the device, or due to overriding the default MAC address.

MintNet: Fix problem with ARP when using Daynaport firmware v1.4a.

Any problems, please let me know,
Roger Burrows

=~==~==

PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and I'm sitting here after my Thanksgiving dinner, full of turkey and stuffing and all the trimmings... cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes and gravy, the freshly baked rolls and the all of the delicious desserts. Ya wanna talk about opulence? I'm almost ashamed to mention the desserts we had.

Of course, they weren't MY desserts. We had dinner at my sister-in-law's. So I guess I can blame her for the embarrassment of riches. [grin]

Anyway, if you know anything at all about me, you know that I'm a certified turkey fiend. Turkey is one of my favorite foods of all time. Soooo.... I'll be making a turkey for just the two of us over the weekend. I love turkey.

Of course, with just the two of us, I'll have lots of leftovers. There's lots you can do with leftover turkey. There's turkey soup, turkey pot pie, open-face turkey sandwiches (when I was a kid, just to be funny, we'd call 'em open turkey face sandwiches... wasn't I adorable?), and this year, I think I'm going to try spanish rice and beans with turkey instead of chicken. I love rice and beans. I make it with chicken every couple of months or so. I make what my wife calls a 'bucket-o-rice'. I figure that, if chicken is good in rice and beans, turkey should work too, right? I'll let you know. Oh, and I've been told by people who've grown up with rice and beans that mine is pretty darned good.

I also want to make my annual appeal about donating food to the local foodshare or soup kitchen. I meant to mention it last week, but I got sidetracked. Anyway, more people think of donating the week before a holiday, but how many think about donating the week after? And people need food all year 'round, not just during the holidays. So drop off a couple of cans of something, or that extra frozen turkey you've got taking up space, or send 'em an envelope with a check for a couple of bucks... it doesn't have to be much. It doesn't take a lot to put a meal on a table, but there are times when the fates conspire against us and keep it from happening for a lot of us. It's not just the wino or the crack whore who has to scrape to get by, it's the guy working a blue-collar job who watches a huge portion of his paycheck go toward health insurance for he and his family, it's the two-income family that has something unexpected happen and watches their savings disintegrate before their eyes, and it's the family who's just had a hard time making ends meet that gets one extra piece of bad luck.

In short, it's you or me with just one more bit of tough luck. So drop off a little something to the local foodshare, soup kitchen or shelter, huh?

Well, okay, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp-sys-atari-st NewsGroup
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Roger Burrows posts this about his SCSI/Link drivers:

"I've uploaded new versions of the SCSI/Link drivers for STiNG and MintNet to the Anodyne Software web site; you can download them from this URL:

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Any problems, please let me know!"

Over the last couple of columns, I've mentioned the speech that Jack Tramiel is supposed to be giving. This week, Robert Bernardo tells us:

"The event, "The Impact of the Commodore 64: A 25-Year Celebration", with Jack Tramiel is now listed at the Computer History Museum's website at <http://www.computerhistory.org/events/>"

Peter Schneider asks for info about BigDOS and TT-RAM:

"Since I replaced my TT-RAM card equipped with 32 MB by another one (64 MB) that a friend left to me, my TT resets every time after the AUTO folder programs have been launched..."

I wonder what BigDOS has to deal with my TT RAM. To explain: BigDOS gives the feature (among others) to give access to drives beyond P: when running TOS and usually comes along with HDDRIVER...

And I'm pretty sure it's BigDOS, for if I remove it from the AUTO folder, I normally arrive on my TT's TOS desktop."

Jean-Luc Ceccoli tells Peter:

"If its place in the auto folder is correct, it might be caused by its internal settings, that are supposed to be changed using a small utility named setter. Unfortunately for me, I couldn't find any version of this utility that could allow me to set it up. So I finally gave up and removed it from the auto folder. :-(
I hope you'll be luckier."

Mark Bedingfield adds:

"Yes, it may work if you flag it to run in STram."

Peter replies:

"I had a closer look at these two cards. The one I've been using for 12 years now, is an aixTT with 32 MB. The card I was offered is magnumTT with twice 32 MB.

So, for the moment, I fell back to 32 MB, but am able to exceed to partitions beyond P.

But I don't give up hope that there is an expert to give me the correct jumper settings (if that's the problem)."

Lonny Pursell supplies a helpful URL:

"http://dev-docs.atariforge.org/files/Magnum_TT.pdf"

Jean-Luc tries running the app in ST-RAM, and tells us:

```
"No - unfortunately - :-(
Still the same message :
```

```
----- Quote start -----
**** Unknown command. File damaged or use newer SETTER.
Aborted!
```

```
Konfiguration beendet. / Configuration completed.
----- Quote end -----
```

Though both setter and bigdos are flagged to run in ST-RAM. I thought it might be due to the version of setter I own to be compacted (who knows...), but, again, no. It behaves the same on both my FalCT60 and TT, and either under plain TOS or Magic!"

Well folks, that's it for this week. I hope that there are more messages for us to go through next week. But if there aren't, don't worry. I'm sure I'll have something to babble on about.<G>

See ya next week. 'Till then, keep your ear to the ground, your eye on the horizon, your shoulder to the wheel and your back to the wall. If you can do that...

You must have been hell-on-wheels when it came to TWISTER, huh? <G>

Anyway, keep your ears open so you'll hear what they're saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Wii Is Most-Wanted Widget In Wintertime

Each holiday season, a couple hard-to-find toys send parents hunting from store to store. And, each season, they're soon forgotten: Has your Elmo gotten any tickles lately?

But this year, it looks like the gift everybody is looking for is the same as last year: the Nintendo Wii.

A year after its launch, the small video game console sells out almost immediately when it reaches stores, even after Nintendo Co. has ramped up production several times.

"Right now, if you work at it, it's not too hard," said John Lawrence, of Fort Worth, Texas, who bought a Wii a few weeks ago for his 9-year-old grandson. It took him some online sleuthing to find one at a local GameStop.

"People have not gotten into the Christmas shopping mode. Once people get into that mindset, this is going to be an impossibility as it was last year," Lawrence said.

With the Wii, Nintendo set out make a console that would entice people who were not hardcore gamers, and it has succeeded. Janet Presti stood an hour in line at the Nintendo World Store in New York on Tuesday last week to get a Wii for her three children, but it wasn't just for them.

"I played it at my sister's house and I loved it," she said. Her household already has three game consoles: an Microsoft Xbox 360, a Sony PlayStation 2 and a Nintendo GameCube.

The Wii responds to the user moving the wand-like wireless controller, while other consoles are controlled by a confusing array of buttons and joysticks. It also comes with an array of casual, nonviolent games that appeal to adults.

Sony and Microsoft have cut the prices of their consoles this fall, but continuing demand for the Wii has meant Nintendo hasn't had to.

Perrin Kaplan, vice president of marketing and corporate affairs at Nintendo of America, said the console was "priced right from the beginning." A look at eBay shows that Kaplan may be wrong: New Wii systems are selling about \$100 above the \$250 store price.

Some of the demand for Wiis results from trouble in the toy industry, as well as the gadget's cross-generational appeal.

"No one is buying toys right now because of the recalls," said Gerrick Johnson, a toy industry analyst at BMO Capital Markets.

First, toys were recalled because of lead paint and dangerous magnets. Then, Aqua Dots - colored beads that were making their way to must-have status - were pulled because they were coated with a chemical that turned into the date-rape drug gamma hydroxy butyrate if swallowed.

"It's really unfortunate for the toy industry, because the lead issue was starting to subside, was getting off the front page ... and then along comes this, which is totally outrageous," Johnson said.

"Whoever thought that there'd be a day when parents say 'Don't play with your dangerous toys, go play with your video games?'" he asked.

The console has been a tremendous boost for Nintendo, which lost out to Sony Corp. and Microsoft Corp. in the last generation of game consoles. In the quarter ended Sept. 30, it more than doubled its sales to \$6.1

billion from a year earlier, just before the launch of the Wii. It sold 5.5 million Wiis in the U.S. since it went on sale on last Nov. 17.

The stock market now values Nintendo at \$75 billion, compared to \$48 billion for Sony, which has six times the revenue.

Nintendo has increased the pace of production, but acknowledges that it won't be able to satisfy holiday-season demand.

"It's brand new technology, so you can't build it on just any line," said Nintendo's Kaplan.

In an interview last week, Sony Chief Executive Howard Stringer said the Wii shortages were "a little fortuitous," and indicated that the PlayStation 3 was poised to benefit from the situation. U.S. sales of the console doubled to 100,000 per week soon after an Oct. 18 price cut, he said.

The issue of demand outstripping supply has dogged Nintendo with the DS handheld game as well, which launched in 2004.

"We've been struggling since launch to keep inventory - we finally have enough of that," said Kaplan.

Senators Urge Tougher Rating For "Manhunt" Game

A bipartisan group of lawmakers including a Democratic presidential hopeful is calling on the makers of video games to review the industry's ratings system.

In letter to the Entertainment Software Rating Board, the lawmakers complained about its decision to give an "mature" rating Rockstar's "Manhunt 2" game.

Sens. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., Sam Brownback, R-Kan., Evan Bayh, D-Ind., and Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., said the game's violent content, which includes "many graphic torture scenes and murders," should have garnered an "adults only" rating.

Clinton, the front-runner for the Democratic nomination for president, has long pressed for tougher ratings and has called for a unified ratings system for movies, games and TV shows.

"We ask your consideration of whether it is time to review the robustness, reliability and repeatability of your ratings process, particularly for this genre of 'ultraviolent' video games and the advances in game controllers," the senators wrote. "We have consistently urged parents to pay attention to the ESRB rating system. We must ensure that parents can rely on the consistency and accuracy of those ratings."

Rockstar also makes the controversial "Grand Theft Auto" series of games.

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Study: Internet Could Run Out Of Capacity In Two Years

Consumer and corporate use of the Internet could overload the current capacity and lead to brown-outs in two years unless backbone providers invest billions of dollars in new infrastructure, according to a study released Monday.

A flood of new video and other Web content could overwhelm the Internet by 2010 unless backbone providers invest up to \$137 billion in new capacity, more than double what service providers plan to invest, according to the study, by Nemertes Research Group, an independent analysis firm. In North America alone, backbone investments of \$42 billion to \$55 billion will be needed in the next three to five years to keep up with demand, Nemertes said.

The study is the first to "apply Moore's Law (or something very like it) to the pace of application innovation on the 'Net," the study says. "Our findings indicate that although core fiber and switching/routing resources will scale nicely to support virtually any conceivable user demand, Internet access infrastructure, specifically in North America, will likely cease to be adequate for supporting demand within the next three to five years."

The study confirms long-time concerns of the Internet Innovation Alliance (IIA), an advocacy group focused on upgrading U.S. broadband networks, said Bruce Mehlman, co-chairman of the group. The group, with members including AT&T, Level 3 Communications, Corning, Americans for Tax Reform, and the American Council of the Blind, has been warning people of the coming "exaflood" of video and other Web content that could clog its pipes.

The study gives "good, hard, unique data" on the IIA concerns about network capacity, Mehlman said. The Nemertes study suggests demand for Web applications like streaming and interactive video, peer-to-peer file transfers, and music downloads will accelerate, creating a demand for more capacity. Close to three quarters of U.S. Internet users watched an average of 158 minutes of video in May and viewed more than 8.3 billion video streams, according to research from comScore, an analysis group.

Internet users will create 161 exabytes of new data this year, and this exaflood is a positive development for Internet users and businesses, IIA says. An exabyte is 1 quintillion bytes or about 1.1 billion gigabytes. One exabyte is the equivalent of about 50,000 years of DVD-quality video.

Carriers and policy makers need to be aware of this demand, Mehlman added.

"Video has unleashed an explosion of Internet content," Mehlman said. "We think the exaflood is generally not well understood and its investment implications not well defined."

The responsibility for keeping up with this growing demand lies with

backbone providers and national policy makers, added Mehlman, also executive director of the Technology CEO Council, a trade group, and a former assistant secretary of technology policy in the U.S. Department of Commerce.

"It takes a digital village," he said. "Certainly, infrastructure providers have plenty to do. You've seen billions in investment, and you're seeing ongoing billions more."

U.S. lawmakers can also help in several ways, he said. For example, the U.S. Congress could require that home contractors who receive government assistance for building affordable housing include broadband connections in their houses, he said. Congress could also provide tax credits to help broadband providers add more capacity, he said.

Consumers also pay high taxes for telecommunication services, averaging about 13 percent on some telecom services, similar to the tax rate on tobacco and alcohol, Mehlman said. One tax on telecom service has remained in place since the 1898 Spanish-American War, when few U.S. residents had telephones, he noted.

"We think it's a mistake to treat telecom like a luxury and tax it like a sin," he said.

One Laptop Per Child Extends Promotion

A promotion in which a customer buying a \$188 computer in the U.S. and Canada automatically donates a second one to a child in a developing country was extended until year's end, organizers said Thursday.

The "Give One, Get One" program will now run through Dec. 31, instead of ending on Nov. 26, according to the One Laptop Per Child Program, a nonprofit spinoff from Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The program said customers in the U.S. and Canada will pay \$399 for two laptops, with one going to the buyer and the other to a child in such countries as Rwanda, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Haiti and Mongolia.

"In the past 10 days, we've experienced an outpouring of support from the public that is truly gratifying and encouraging," said Nicholas Negroponte, the program's founder.

Negroponte said they decided to extend the program because "so many people have asked for more time to participate either individually or in order to organize local and national groups to which they belong."

"We want as many people as possible to have the opportunity to act upon the giving spirit of the holiday season," he said.

The laptop has a homegrown user interface designed for children, boasts built-in wireless networking, uses very little power and can be recharged by hand with a pulley or a crank.

PayPal Offers Secure Way To Shop Non-PayPal Sites

PayPal, the payments service arm of online auction leader eBay Inc, is set to release on Tuesday a convenient way for its customers to make payments on Web sites that don't accept PayPal directly.

The new software utility, called the PayPal Secure Card, recognizes when a user lands on an e-commerce checkout page and automatically helps the user fill out the payment form in a secure way that also offers stepped-up fraud protections.

It answers an innovation by Google Inc, which a year ago introduced Google Checkout, which stores financial details to make shopping more convenient, analysts said.

Through a partnership with credit card issuer MasterCard Inc, Secure Card generates a unique MasterCard number each time a PayPal user arrives on an e-commerce sales checkout page that does not otherwise accept its payments.

"From a merchant's perspective this looks like any other MasterCard transaction," said Chris George, director of financial products for PayPal. "And it's just another PayPal purchase to the customer."

Secure Card has been tested by 3 million PayPal customers in the past year. The plug-in will be available to U.S. customers on Tuesday, with international customers to follow.

When a PayPal customer wants to pay for something on a site that doesn't normally accept PayPal payments, users click a downloaded PayPal button on their browsers to generate a unique, single-instance Secure Card transaction number.

"Actual PayPal activity goes up," George said. "It makes sense, because it just makes shopping easier and safer."

By residing on the PayPal user's computer, Secure Card can detect when users visit e-commerce sites. The software then automatically fills in their stored financial information, requiring just a few more clicks to authorize a transaction.

PayPal stores no details on the local computer for security reasons. Instead, it logs Secure Card activity in the user's account on central computers for safety and record-keeping.

Secure Cards work on Windows computers running either Internet Explorer or Firefox. Users of Apple's Safari browser have only partial access to the service for now, George said.

Red Gillen, an analyst with financial services research firm Celent, said the new service makes PayPal useful on e-commerce sites across the Web, not just on online merchants that have embedded PayPal technology into their own sites.

"This is really the way to complement those Web sites that don't take PayPal already," the analyst said.

Usage of PayPal on the Web at large is growing at nearly twice the rate that it is on eBay and the new service will help further accelerate this growth beyond the tens of thousands of merchants who already accept PayPal payments.

In the third quarter ended September, transactions through Web merchants grew 61 percent to \$5.38 billion from a year ago, while overall PayPal transaction volume grew 34 percent to \$12.22 billion over the same period.

PayPal reported 37.5 million active accounts during the latest quarter, and 164 million total accounts worldwide.

Secure Cards is the latest measure from eBay to curtail "phishing" - spam e-mails that seek to deceive customers into clicking on bogus sites and giving up key financial details.

A study by anti-virus firm SophosLabs found in September only 21 percent of phishing purported to come from eBay or PayPal. A year ago, 85 percent of these bogus messages claimed to be from these two leading auction and online payment sites.

Mozilla Releases First Beta of Firefox 3

Mozilla launched a new beta of Firefox this week, essentially a developer preview of the features and functions promised in the third major point release of the popular open-source browser. Firefox 3 Beta 1 is available for testing so Mozilla can gain feedback before the software advances to the next stage in the release process.

"Much of the work leading up to this first beta has been around developing the infrastructure to support a bunch of exciting new features," Mozilla noted. "With this first beta, you'll get a taste of what's coming in Firefox 3, but there's still more to come, and much of what you'll see is still a bit rough around the edges."

Rough edges include the fact that Firefox add-ons don't work properly with the beta version. Those add-ons include applications such as ad blockers, search engines, and dictionaries in other languages. Mozilla did not offer a final release date, noting only that the final version will be launched "when we qualify the product as fully ready for our users."

Firefox 3 Beta 1 is based on the new Gecko 1.9 Web rendering platform. The platform includes nearly two million lines of code changes designed to fix some 11,000 issues. Gecko 1.9 includes some major changes to enhance performance, stability, and code simplification and sustainability.

Mozilla said Gecko 1.9 makes for a more secure, easier to use, more personal product with a lot under the hood to offer Web site and Firefox add-on developers.

New security features include malware protection, more informative SSL information, and a one-click function to identify who owns a site. In addition, Firefox 3 automatically checks add-ons and will disable older, insecure versions. The browser even will inform antivirus software when downloading executables, and it respects the Windows Vista parental control setting for disabling file downloads.

In terms of the user interface, Firefox 3 offers a slew of updates. The

new browser is designed to make it easier to manage passwords with an information bar that replaces the old password dialog. That means you can now save passwords after a successful login. What's more, the add-ons whitelist has been removed so you can install extensions from third-party sites in fewer clicks.

Mozilla also set out to make the browser more personal, with a star button that lets you add bookmarks from the location bar with a single click. A "smart places" folder lets you access recently bookmarked and tagged pages, as well as more frequently visited pages.

Performance-wise, Mozilla is promising greater reliability with bookmarks, history, cookies, and preferences now stored in a secure database format designed to prevent data loss even if the system crashes. The new version also plugs more than 300 individual memory leaks.

At this stage in browser development, most of what the market sees will be evolutionary, according to Michael Gartenberg, an analyst at Jupiter Research. Although there still is plenty of room for improvement, he explained, most of the improvements won't be as dramatic as in past years.

"No doubt, once Firefox 3 gets released it will pick up some mainstream usage," Gartenberg said. "There's a lot of nice features in there. But in terms of browsing, it's probably not going to blow people away the way the first releases did."

Town May Criminalize Online Harassment

The tragedy of Megan Meier will take another twist Wednesday night when officials in her home town vote on whether to make online harassment a local crime.

Meier is the 13-year-old suburban St. Louis girl who met a cute 16-year-old named Josh Evans last year on the social networking site MySpace. They became close, but suddenly he turned on her, calling her names, saying she was "a bad person and everybody hates you." Others joined the harassment - the barrage culminated in Megan's Oct. 16, 2006, suicide, just short of her 14th birthday.

Weeks later, Megan's grieving parents learned that the boy didn't exist - he'd been fabricated by a neighbor, the mother of one of Megan's former friends. The girls had had a falling out, police say, and she wanted to know what Megan was saying about her daughter.

Local police and the FBI investigated, but more than a year later, no criminal charges have been filed. Tonight, the Dardenne Prairie Board of Aldermen will vote on whether to make Internet harassment a crime in its jurisdiction.

But since a local newspaper columnist broke the story of Megan's death last week, the case has grabbed the attention of the blogosphere: The paper didn't identify the neighbor, and police say she committed no crime, but bloggers who see it differently have outed and humiliated the family online.

The St. Charles Journal decided not to identify the neighbor in the

absence of criminal charges or a civil complaint - even though her name is in a police report on a related incident. Columnist Steve Pokin said he wanted to protect her daughter. "Kids don't get to choose their parents," he said.

But once the story was posted online, bloggers matched details in his lengthy piece with property records to come up with the name. Thousands of readers soon began posting hateful comments. They posted a map and satellite image of her home on the website rottenneighbor.com, calling the family "psychos who pushed a teenager to SUICIDE."

By the end of the week, bloggers had also posted her name, address, workplace and phone numbers, as well as a photo of her husband, from his employer's website.

The phenomenon is called "Internet shaming," said Daniel Solove, a law professor at George Washington University in Washington, D.C, and author of *The Future of Reputation: Gossip, Rumor, and Privacy on the Internet*.

"If people catch people in a transgression - increasingly they're posting their personal information online," he said. "It's bringing back a kind of mob justice, a posse that is very troubling."

Megan's mother, Tina Meier, 37, said Tuesday that a civil suit is still an option, but "obviously we're hoping that the next step is that criminal charges are going to be filed against the family."

She also advised parents to beware of adults pretending to be kids online. "I'm hoping that parents will take an extra step and take a look at their MySpace accounts, their Facebook accounts - it's not just kids. You obviously can have an adult, and it doesn't have to be a sexual predator."

The neighbor's family did not respond to calls from USA TODAY, which also is not publishing their names.

Dardenne Prairie Mayor Pam Fogarty, a mother of five, says she's frustrated that there have been no charges. "It's more than astounding," she said. "It's like, 'Come on, guys - find something that fits.' "

The proposed ordinance would make online harassment a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a \$500 fine and up to 90 days in jail. "I'm angry that what I can put into place isn't enough - and it's not retroactive," she said.

She's also pushing a resolution asking state lawmakers to make online harassment a felony statewide.

County prosecutor Jack Banas said Monday that he'd look into the case, but that he had yet to meet with the Meier family or read the details of reports. He wouldn't say whether he'll bring charges, but noted that no one, including the U.S. Justice Department, found charges warranted.

"They're probably right," Banas said. "I just don't want to say that until I've had a chance to look over all the reports."

In the meantime, Fogarty has asked police to take on extra patrols in the neighborhood where the Meiers and the other family live.

If someone were to hurt the other family, she said, "It's another young

person that's going to have to suffer - and that's not what we want to happen."

PC Beats WWII Computer In Code Challenge

A rebuilt World War II code-cracking computer developed to intercept Nazi messages lost to a desktop computer Friday in a contest to decipher an encrypted radio message.

The challenge marked the first time the Colossus machine had been used since former Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered models of the top secret computer destroyed, according to Britain's National Museum of Computing, which organized the contest.

Churchill had feared Britain's national security would be threatened if the state of the art computer's technical details ever leaked out.

However, not only was Colossus beaten by a home computer, but by one in Germany.

Bonn-based software engineer Joachim Schueth deciphered the message, which was encrypted by a Nazi-era Lorenz cipher machine and transmitted by radio from Paderborn, Germany. It took him two hours Thursday, an hour and 35 minutes faster than the Colossus. He used ham radio equipment and a computer program he wrote especially for the challenge.

Schueth paid tribute to Colossus and those who used it during WWII at the Bletchley Park code-breaking center, outside London, saying their work was important to Germans because "it helped to shorten the lifetime of the Nazi dictatorship."

But Colossus, the world's first programable computer, was no match for its electronic descendants, he said.

"Putting Colossus in a competition with modern computers may be a bit unfair," Schueth wrote on his Web site.

Colossus eventually completed the challenge in three hours and 35 minutes, after overcoming difficulties intercepting the distant radio signal and repairing a blown valve.

"We've lost appreciation of just how hard it was to intercept signals, interpret them and put them on Colossus and run them," said Andy Clark, director of the Bletchley Park-based computing museum.

"The past two days have brought into sharp focus just how hard they had to work," he said.

Experts spent 14 years rebuilding the Colossus using stolen design plans and by gleaning information from those who helped create the original.

Ten Mark II Colossus machines enabled code breakers at Bletchley to decipher top-secret communications sent by the Nazi high command.

The rebuilt computer will continue to operate as the museum's centerpiece, Clark said.

Spam-Spitting Storm Virus, A Year Old, Is As Tricky As Ever

One of the nastiest - and most persistent - sources of spam just turned a year old.

Since it touched down in e-mail inboxes, the Storm virus has infected at least 1 million PCs worldwide and is responsible for billions of spam messages. Since July, e-mail management company Postini alone has blocked nearly 1.5 billion copies of Storm. (Before Storm hit, Postini blocked about 1 million tainted e-mail messages a day.)

And anti-spam experts expect even more rumblings during the holidays. They predict Storm - which is spread largely through virus-infected PCs - will set record volumes by the end of the year, including up to 500 million messages during the holiday season.

"There does not seem to be any let-up in sight," says Adam Swidler, a senior manager at Postini, a subsidiary of Google. "Storm is perfectly capable of virtually unlimited mutations."

The chameleon-like Storm surfaced in November 2006 as Nuwar, an e-mail attachment purporting to be a news story about an imminent nuclear war between the United States and Russia. What it contained was a computer virus that turned the victim's PC into a machine controlled by others, spitting out penny-stock-fraud spam.

By December 2006, the attachment morphed into a New Year's greeting, with the same malicious payload.

In January, it had a new name, Storm, and disguise: an e-card with a link to a tainted website containing a story about a deadly weather catastrophe.

None of its techniques, taken alone, have been particularly innovative. But its various mutations and morphing techniques always seem to be one step ahead of anti-virus vendors, who can't update spam filters fast enough to block new infections.

Storm's e-mail subject headers have ranged from faux stories about Russian and Chinese missile attacks to electronic love letters, the NFL, and videos from Beyonce and Foo Fighters. All were fakes, digital teasers to trick victims into clicking on tainted Web links.

In addition to employing ever-changing e-mail subject headers, Storm's purveyors in September began planting invisible infections on hobby websites and community forums, including a forum for Apple Macintosh users. Merely browsing to one of these seemingly innocuous websites infected the visitor's PC.

"It's a vivid illustration of how run-of-the-mill crooks are taking yesterday's scams and leveraging them forward using e-mail and sophisticated malicious hacking tools," says Patrick Peterson, vice president of technology at security firm IronPort Systems, a division of Cisco Systems.

Despite Filters, Tidal Wave of Spam Bears Down On E-mailers

"Two years from now, spam will be solved." - Microsoft's Bill Gates, 2004, World Economic Forum in Switzerland

Why, in 2007, is spam worse than ever? Let exasperated consumers count the ways: PDF spam. MP3 spam. Pump-and-dump spam. E-card spam.

It may sound like a broken record, but spam continues to do just that - break records. This year marks the first time the total number of spam e-mail messages sent worldwide, 10.8 trillion, will surpass the number of person-to-person e-mails sent, 10.5 trillion, according to market researcher IDC.

"Every year for the past four years has been the worst year yet," says Rebecca Steinberg Herson, vice president of marketing at e-mail security firm Commtouch.

Unwanted commercial e-mail touting Viagra, get-rich-quick schemes and more is growing by electronic leaps and bounds: an Internet-buckling 60 billion to 150 billion messages a day. "It was one of the rare times (Gates) was wrong," says David Mayer, a product manager at e-mail security firm IronPort Systems, a Cisco Systems division.

The sheer volume of unwanted commercial e-mail is like a tidal wave, washing over the best-built digital dams and, despite a federal anti-spam law, resulting in spam leaking through to consumers.

Feeding the spam-alanche are advances in spamming techniques, the rise of bots - millions of compromised PCs that spew spam - and the fact that more people have multiple e-mail addresses. Market researcher The Radicati Group estimates there will be 2.4 billion e-mail accounts worldwide by year's end.

Eliminating spam is "a war you cannot win," says Greg Toto, vice president of products and operations at computer security firm BigFix. "It is much cheaper to send spam than stop it. Spam is becoming more specialized, and spammers are taking advantage of bad practices by consumers and businesses.

"The stuff continues to spill through," Toto says.

And how. Despite Gates' bold prophecy, a revolving door of anti-spam products and the Can-Spam Act of 2003 - whose advocates breathlessly predicted would deter spammers - the total volume of meddlesome stuff has continued an inexorable climb.

So much so that Gates recently clarified his 3-year-old prediction.

"I never said it would be solved," Gates said in an interview with USA TODAY last month. "I said it would be substantially reduced, and in fact it has been reduced a lot."

When reminded that numbers are spiking, Gates begged to differ. "Sure, there's a lot (of spam) out there, but software is deleting 99.9% of that anyway," he said. (Microsoft now pegs the figure at 85% to 95%.)

Spam is popping up in different guises - whether as attachments that appear to be PDFs, MP3 files and Excel spreadsheets - to evade anti-spam

services, says Scott Petry, founder of e-mail security firm Postini, a subsidiary of Google.

Faux electronic-greeting cards, containing links to viruses, have also picked up. Since July, Postini alone has blocked more than 1.5 billion copies of Storm, an e-mail virus masquerading as a greeting card.

Meanwhile, spam containing PDFs, non-existent in May, now accounts for 8% of unsolicited commercial e-mail. "The bad guys have taken a highly mutated approach because they're only paid for what gets through," says Jose Nazario, senior security researcher at Arbor Networks.

This summer, a PDF promoting a pump-and-dump scam urged consumers to buy shares in an obscure company called Prime Time Group. Anti-virus firm Sophos reported a 30% spike in spam moving across the Internet at the time, fueled by the missive. The fraudulent spam messages were sent from compromised home PCs by Storm, the e-mail worm that entices victims to click on tainted e-card links and thereby turns their PCs into spam-spewing bots.

Although Sophos blocked more than 500 million copies of the Prime Time PDF, it is likely the Internet was swamped by several billion copies of this particular piece of fraud spam. Many copies were getting blocked by anti-spam filters, but some made it to unprotected in-boxes.

"As long as even a small percentage of people continue responding to pump-and-dump scams like this, the problem will continue to exist," says Ron O'Brien, Sophos' senior security analyst.

And then there is phishing, those fraudulent e-mail and websites designed to rip off personal information. An insidious version of spam, its levels are at all-time highs. In July 2007 - the most recent month for which data are available - the Anti-Phishing Working Group said new phishing sites pole-vaulted to 30,999, from 14,191 in July 2006.

One in 87 e-mails is tagged as phishing scams now, compared with one in 500 a year ago, according to e-mail security firm MessageLabs.

All is not lost, however. Consumers and corporations are getting creative to cope with the problem, operating on the premise that spam is inescapable.

"You can't eradicate (spam), but you can manage the problem," says Arbor Networks' Nazario, who compares spam to the flu.

Industrious e-mail users are using an exotic mix of software and services to tamp down spam across several fronts. Think of it as their idea of spam inoculation.

For a start, tens of millions use Google's Gmail because it was designed with built-in spam defenses. Others are joining social-networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, where they control who has access to their personal profile, to exchange e-mail with friends, family and business associates.

Many also use phishing filters provided by Microsoft on its Internet Explorer browser. Last month, Yahoo, eBay and PayPal took a major step to shield customers from phishing attacks. They announced eBay and PayPal customers who use Yahoo Mail should start receiving fewer bogus e-mails because it now uses DomainKeys, an e-mail-authentication technology.

A new breed of e-mail services, such as CertifiedEmail from Goodmail Systems, put the financial onus on the senders of unsolicited commercial e-mail.

CertifiedEmail treats e-mail as a FedEx-like service. For less than one-fourth of a penny per message, commercial marketers, government agencies and non-profits are guaranteed delivery of e-mail to individuals who have indicated they will accept the messages from that specific sender. Recipients see a blue seal verifying that the message is legitimate, says David Atlas, senior vice president of worldwide sales and marketing at Goodmail.

Another free option, Boxbe, lets users of Gmail, Microsoft Outlook and Yahoo Mail create a guest list, giving them final say on who is allowed to send e-mail. Anyone not on the list receives an invitation to join when they send an e-mail to the Boxbe user.

The multilayered-defense approach has worked to stop such scourges as image spam, which varied the content of individual messages - through colors, backgrounds, picture sizes or font types - to slip through spam filters. Image spam made up half of all spam in January. Since software makers came up with a solution, image spam has dropped to 8% of all spam, Symantec says.

Given all of these free available solutions, and their success in some cases, could the future be brighter for spam-slammed consumers?

Richi Jennings, lead analyst for e-mail security at Ferris Research, thinks so. He expects evolving anti-spam technology to slowly choke off unwanted commercial e-mail.

Could Gates' oft-disparaged prophecy be right, after all?

"As more people have in-boxes protected by better and better spam filters, their experience of spam gets closer to Gates' vision," Jennings says. "He was a bit overaggressive with the prediction, of course. But spam isn't an easy problem to solve."

Senate OKs Restitution for Cybercrime Victims

The U.S. Senate has passed a bill that would allow victims of online identity theft schemes to seek restitution from criminals and expands the definition of cyberextortion.

The Senate passed the Identity Theft Enforcement and Restitution Act by unanimous consent last week. The bill, introduced a month ago by Senator Patrick Leahy, a Vermont Democrat, allows victims of identity theft to seek restitution for the time they spend to fix the problems. The bill would allow prosecutors to go after criminals who threaten to take or release information from computers with cyberextortion, and it would allow prosecutors to charge cybercriminals with conspiracy to commit a cybercrime.

Current law only permits the prosecution of criminals who seek to extort companies or government agencies by explicitly threatening to shut down or damage a computer.

The bill would also make it a felony to use spyware or keystroke loggers to damage 10 or more computers, even if the amount of damage was less than US\$5,000. In the past, damage of less than \$5,000 was a misdemeanor.

The legislation, among other things, would also allow the federal prosecution of those who steal personal information from a computer even when the victim's computer is in the same state as the attacker's computer. Under current law, federal courts only have jurisdiction if the thief attacks from another state, according to Leahy's office.

Leahy, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, applauded the Senate action. The U.S. Department of Justice worked with senators to craft the legislation and fill holes in cybercrime laws, he said on the Senate floor.

The bill "takes several important and long-overdue steps to protect Americans from the growing and evolving threat of identity theft and other cybercrimes," he said. "To better protect American consumers, our bill provides the victims of identity theft with the ability to seek restitution in federal court for the loss of time and money spent restoring their credit and remedying the harms of identity theft, so that identity theft victims can be made whole."

The Business Software Alliance (BSA), a trade group, and the Cyber Security Industry Alliance (CSIA) both praised the Senate for passing the legislation. The BSA urged the House of Representatives to act on a similar bill.

The Senate bill closes "loopholes" in U.S. law, CSIA President Tim Bennett said in a statement.

The Senate bill will "provide law enforcement greater tools to crack down on the increasingly sophisticated network of cybercriminals," Bennett added. "Identity theft and data breaches have become organized crime's number one business."

Web Deals Woo Shoppers From Thanksgiving Table

The holiday shopping season kicked off on Thursday even before the turkey was carved, as retailers, worried that gift buying may slow this year, posted special deals on their Web sites on Thanksgiving day.

Numerous retailers, including Wal-Mart Stores Inc, Best Buy Co Inc and Circuit City Stores Inc, are offering special deals online.

Wal-Mart on Thursday was advertising on its Web site a Magnavox 47-inch flat-screen television for \$1,298, while Circuit City offered a Sony Blu-ray disc player for \$399.99.

"Black Friday," as U.S. retailers call the day after Thanksgiving, starts the ultra-competitive holiday shopping season. Retailers traditionally open their doors in the early morning hours and offer special, limited-time discounts.

This year, retailers have rolled out holiday deals and promotions earlier than ever, using Web sites more extensively to advertise special

discounts.

The scramble in cyberspace for consumers comes as retailers worry U.S. shoppers may reduce spending in the face of higher food and fuel costs, the slowing housing market and the credit market crunch.

Walmart.com CEO Raul Vazquez said traffic to the retailer's Web site has been rising headed into the Thanksgiving holiday shopping weekend.

"We would expect to get around 10 million" visitors to its site on Thanksgiving, he said. That would be a big jump from typical traffic of 2 million daily visits during other times of the year.

Some retailers allowed shoppers to sign up on their Web sites to receive cellular phone text messages alerting them when new sales and discounts are posted.

The Web sites of most major retailers appeared to be functioning well, with no slowdowns.

JCPenney is even offering customers wake up calls to get them to stores in time for the 4 a.m. doorbuster sales.

Some malls are opening as early as midnight on Thanksgiving night, holding special "Midnight Madness" shopping events.

Web Offers Myriad Choices for Holiday Cards

A search for fun holiday cards yields a world of choices on the Web, where sites will personalize greetings, offering distinctive missives from elf aerobics to Santa wearing only a mistletoe sprig.

The sites range from the free-wheeling MOO.com and Zazzle.com, with thousands of user-generated images for Web savvy shoppers who demand to stand out, to the easy-to-use MyCardMaker.com, beloved by busy middle-aged clientele.

The U.K.-based site MOO.com has drawn more than 2,400 user-generated entries for a holiday card design contest it is sponsoring with a \$2,000 prize.

The only rule governing entries is that designs should be "vaguely related to the holidays," MOO.com founder and Chief Executive Richard Moross said.

"We want to be open to people's different interpretations of the holidays," Moross said. "It's a very distinct alternative to the massive (greeting card) industry."

Rather than shuffling through racks of spangle-encrusted greetings in card stores, MOO.com users can choose from thousands of contest entries or professional design images and write their own holiday messages.

The images, including personal photos, can be cropped and rotated and laid out in a variety of ways on card stock supplied by MOO.com. To complete their order, users choose the color scheme, font style and card size.

A package of 10 cards, assorted or all the same, printed on high-grade card stock costs \$19.99, plus about \$5 shipping, and takes five to 10 days for delivery, Moross said.

Although Moross started the site in 2004 for an Internet savvy customer he modeled on his 19-year-old sister, the breadth of the site's users has surprised him.

"The world has kind of grown up and everyone is doing it now," he said.

For consumers short on time or computer skills but long on ambition, MyCardMaker.com aims to take the frustration out of card-customizing by limiting their choices.

The process, which takes about three mouse clicks to complete, is especially appealing to the site's main clientele: women, ages 35 to 60, said spokesman Tim Letscher.

"It's rudimentary and simple. That's the way our customers like it," Letscher said.

Earlier this year, users complained when the company tried to remove suggested greetings from inside the cards, so they were reinstated, he said.

The site has a selection of about 180 cards designed by professional illustrators and artists, and 75 holiday-theme photo borders. Users can, and often do, use their own photos for cards, but the site does not have retouching tools - too complicated, said Letscher.

For membership fees from \$3.99 for a day to \$29.99 for two years, users can design and email or print on their home computers as many cards as they like. The membership fee also entitles users to discounts on professional printing jobs.

On the other end of the spectrum is Zazzle.com, which offers "an unlimited number" of images because its tools let users customize all four panels of a card, and the postage stamps as well, spokeswoman Amber Harrison said.

Zazzle is running a daily card competition featuring art and photo submissions by amateurs and professionals that are available for customizing.

The site's design tool can alter practically any component of an image with hundreds of fonts, and text and color choices. Or, users can start from scratch with their own photos or illustrations.

Single greeting cards start at \$2.95 with discounts given for larger orders.

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